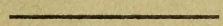
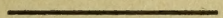


*Henington H.S.*

**Lennox and Addington Historical Society**



**President's Address, 1918**



F5012  
1918  
L568

F5012

1918

L568

# Lennox and Addington Historical Society

## President's Address, 1918

Another year in the life of our Society has passed into history; a year fraught with events than which none have been more momentous since time first began. There was never a period in the lives of any of us when the need of an historical society in every community was so clearly demonstrated as at present. To appreciate the significance of the alleged aims and activities of the various belligerents engaged in this world-wide war it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the leading characteristics of the races and peoples arrayed against each other, their achievements and records of the past and the motives which prompted them to take one side or the other in the present conflict. For the successful prosecution of the war no country can rest content with the study of armaments, the raising of large bodies of fighting units and the equipping and drilling of them in the arts of modern warfare. We are dealing with a brave, unscrupulous, intellectual and Godless foe who will stop at nothing in order to achieve his wicked ends. True he is brave but void of all sense of honor and has no dream of mercy in his being. Witness the thousands of outraged homes in which he sought shelter and was accorded a hospitality he had no right to expect. Unscrupulous in all things even in the most elementary principles of common honesty. Even the Crown Prince of Germany did not hesitate to place himself in the category of the common sneak thief by looting treasures from the unguarded homes of the invaded territory. No one can deny the intel-

lectuality of the Teuton, but it is a power for evil rather than for good and seems to lack an originality and creative genius except in devising new and treacherous means for violating not only the recognized rules of civilized warfare, but the universal laws of humanity and common decency. But perhaps his most heinous offence is his persistent blasphemy in presuming to associate himself with the Almighty and asking His benediction upon his murderous and wicked machinations. As the Kaiser believes himself to be divinely appointed to rule the German nation, so he believes the German people have a divine mission to dominate the world. Hence the national cry "Deutschland über alles". It is this mad fanaticism of the foe deaf to reason and blind to the just rights of other nations that renders the aim of the Allies so difficult of attainment. To cope with such a foe whose character is made up of so many vicious elements not only are the services of a shrewd and skilled general required, but just as essential for the purpose are the analytical minds of the historian, ethnologist and philosopher. The influence and effect of the overpowering mind of the Prussian upon the races brought under his subjection is a complex study in itself. Professing a Kultur far surpassing that of all other branches of the human race he is in reality in some respects raised little above the untutored barbarian of the middle ages. He is so arrogant in his estimate of his own superiority that he recognizes little, if any, merit in the art, advanced civilization and religious

3027501

sentiment of those opposed to him and sees no wrong in the ruthless destruction of their priceless treasures. The world stood aghast at his unspeakable atrocities. It required confirmation from such men as Viscount Bryce before even the English speaking world would believe him guilty of the terrible outrages charged against him, and even then we failed to appreciate the horror of his crimes until concrete cases were brought home to us such as the murder of Edith Cavell. In like manner some among us even at this late hour are disposed to discredit the enormity of his ambitious projects and suggest a compromise with the enemy rather than continue the outpouring of our blood and treasure. His true character is only revealed by a careful study of his history and the works of his own leading writers. The greatest danger that confronts the Allies at the present time is not the lack of men, food or munitions, but a right understanding by the great mass of the people as to what a defeat actually means.

How then is such an understanding to be acquired? Our daily press devotes the most of its space to the visible movements of the men in the fighting line and the means employed in securing them and training them for that position. It is true there are many able editorials and communications dealing with reasons for our continuing in the war until a decisive and complete victory is achieved but these valuable contributions are I fear, as a rule, passed over and preference given to the more thrilling experiences recorded by the war correspondents. Most of our magazines cater to the popular taste and present to us only the superficial aspects of the war. I do not wish to be understood as depreciating the work of our press and magazines. They never served the world as well as they are serving it to-day. A careful study of all the excellent reading matter that is published in this form must in the end produce a good effect upon the reader. The great difficulty in seeking

instruction in the deeper problems from such a source is the great waste of time in avoiding unprofitable repetition and in separating the useful matter from the useless. We, however, have hundreds of interesting and instructive books by capable authors. There is no lack of them. It is a lamentable fact, but nevertheless true, that many of the best of them have not been opened since the leaves were cut by the reviewer. I am not now speaking of some far off country or distant city or town, but of our own Town of Napanee. I can shew you upon the shelves of our own library at least one hundred books written by the most prominent authors in the world, many of them translated from foreign languages, books dealing with the history of the different warring nations, books treating of different phases of the war from almost every point of view, books that every intelligent man and woman should read so far as their time will give them opportunity. These books, I am sorry to say, have scarcely been disturbed since they were placed there.

The magnitude of the war is recognized by every one, but there still appears to be in many minds no proper appreciation of the real issues at stake and of the awful consequences that will follow if Prussian militarism be not now crushed and so overwhelmingly crushed that it will never lift its head again. How gladly then should we welcome every agency that will throw any light upon this vital subject. It has been our aim during the season now drawing to a close to help to supply this want and to get in closer touch with men who have devoted themselves to a study of the graver problems involved in the war. What we learn at these lectures is valuable itself but we cannot hope to acquire much knowledge in the few hours spent in this room, but if we have succeeded in creating a taste for further knowledge and deeper study then our efforts will not have been in vain. In the months intervening before the

resumption of our next season's lectures I commend to your consideration the many instructive volumes in our library to which I have already alluded.

We should all be on our guard against the arguments of the pacifist who would play upon our sympathy for the boys in the trenches and would urge an early peace in order to terminate their hardships. Such arguments as a rule emanate originally from the German propagandist. No greater calamity could happen than a premature peace. If the Prussian militarists emerge from this war still the masters of the Central Empires and are not called to task for all the suffering they have produced then I fear the greater part of our sacrifices will have been in vain.

With the most diabolical hypocrisy they have shed crocodile tears over the oppressed Slavs and have feigned a desire to free them from an irksome rule and upon the first opportunity they bind them in fetters more galling than the Serfdom of sixty years ago. Thus German Kultur in the face of its pretensions has turned back, or attempted to turn back, the clock in Russia one hundred years. The Germans are now gloating over their victory on the eastern front. Victory over what? The present crisis is the culmination of a series of well laid and treacherous plans for the subjugation of the disorganized masses of an illiterate ill-advised, war-weary people. But the German rejoicing in the east may be of comparatively short duration. Their so-called victory will no doubt furnish temporary relief in augmenting their scanty rations and raise the dropping spirits of the common people and prolong the war for a few months or perhaps years, but the day of reckoning will come. The real voice of Russia has not yet been heard, and when it is, it will be in stentorian tones that will startle the Hohenzollern dynasty. There is an under-current of unrest among the German people, a smoldering fire that will burst into a

consuming flame. The contact with the Russians may prove a dangerous experiment for the next revolution to throw off the German yoke may not stop at the old Russian border, but may sweep westward to the Rhine wiping out forever the rule of the Hapsburgs and Hohenzollerns. Truly of Russia and perhaps even of Germany too it may be said:—

"There is a poor, blind Sampson in this land  
Shorn of his strength, and bound in bonds of steel,  
Who may, in some grim revel, raise his hand  
And shake the pillars of this Commonwealth."

I do not despair of Russia rising to her feet and again taking her place among the leading powers of the world. It may take many years, and again it may come sooner than any of us expect. The territorial boundaries may undergo many changes and several distinct nations may take the place of All the Russias, but I have confidence in the hearts of the Russian people and believe that the present storm will be followed by the dawn of a better and happier era for these oppressed people. We need but call to mind that it is within the memory of the passing generation that France was just as prostrate and helpless before the same enemy as Russia is to-day. Little more than half a century has passed since the Great Republic to the south of us was divided into bitter factions tearing at one another's throats. In the early part of the last century Prussia herself was tottering and Berlin suffered the indignity that is likely to befall Petrograd within a few days or weeks. The Russian revolution was enough in itself to tax the strength and endurance of a stronger nation, but when we add to it an intriguing enemy battering at the gates with a perfectly equipped and magnificently trained army, is there any room for wonder that things went awry? Give Russia a chance and she will come to herself. Towards Russia, or at least to-

wards the Russian people, the Germans have at all times professed to entertain a friendly solicitude. From their present treatment of Russia following a treaty of peace based upon their alleged respect for the best interests of the Russians we may be able to catch a faint glimmer of what would happen to a conquered Great Britain for whom they have nothing better than loathing and contempt. Their venom towards us has been displayed through the utterances of their statesman, the writings of their leaders of thought and the avidity with which they welcomed the Hymn of Hate.

We are safe in accepting only one kind of peace and that is a peace dictated by the victorious Allies to a foe who has abandoned his dream of world domination. This means further endurance and sacrifice upon our part. So far we have suffered little of the grim realities of war. A large percentage of our population have not been touched by it, and shew no inclination to come forward and assume their share of the burden. It is to be hoped that our government will devise some means to reach the slacker who is making more money than ever before in his life, and when approached for a contribution to some patriotic fund tightens his purse strings or with a self-satisfied air doles out a petty coin. He never asks himself "how much can I afford to give to this worthy cause?" but his question takes the form "how little can I give and escape public censure?" We have far too many such people quite prepared to fatten on the misfortunes of their country. It needs no royal commission to search out the profiteers. We have them in our midst walking our streets every day. It is high time that these undesirables, who have no other thought but how to increase their profits, were singled out and taught the lesson that citizenship in a free

country carries with it responsibilities as well as advantages. We should esteem it not only a sacred duty but a God-given privilege to help to lighten the burden and relieve the distress and suffering of those whose sacrifices in the cause of justice and freedom press so heavily upon them. Thanks to the initiative and bravery of our citizen soldiers, Canada never stood so favorably in the eyes of the world as at the present time. We need have no fears of them. They will maintain unsullied the glorious record they have made. The greatest danger rests with us who remain at home. We are too prone to leave it to others to do the work that ought to be set apart for us. Let us therefore each study our country's needs and ask ourselves "how best can I serve those needs?" Such is the duty of the hour. Such is true patriotism. We need not seek far to find something to do. The field is broad and the avenues to useful co-operation are many and stand wide open. There is none so old or so young but that he can help, none so weak and none so poor but that he can employ some talent for the good of his country. If we cannot fight, the most of us can pay. If we cannot produce we all can save. If we cannot bear the heavy burdens we can take up the light. If we cannot toil with our hands we can encourage those who do. If we are in earnest in our profession of loyalty and patriotism there are many practical ways in which we can demonstrate it. There is no place in the world to-day for the selfish man, the spineless man, the scoffer and the idler. If we would but realize that this bloody struggle is for a stake fully commensurate with the sacrifices being made we would gladly dedicate our means, our time, our brains, yes, our very souls to the winning of the war.

W. S. Huntington.



